

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EVOLUTION OF THREE-  
DIMENSIONAL MIXED-MEDIA FORMS FROM TWO-  
DIMENSIONAL MIXED-MEDIA SURFACES

PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS

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## LIST OF SLIDES

Slide	Media	Size
1. <u>Windows On The World</u>	mixed media	24"x30"
2. <u>Untitled Mixed Media #1</u>	mixed media	6'x8'
3. <u>Untitled Mixed Media #2</u>	mixed media	3'x9'
4. <u>Wall Piece</u>	mixed media	14'x20'
5. <u>Three D Meanie</u>	mixed media	6'x3'x2'd.
6. <u>Modular Rhythm #1</u>	mixed media	6'x9'
7. <u>Modular Rhythm #2</u>	mixed media	4'x8'
8. <u>One Corner: 2 Walls</u>	mixed media	2'x8'x2'd.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Mixed media art works which defy restrictive categorizing as "painting" or "sculpture" are an acknowledged part of contemporary art. Having worked with a variety of materials in constructing two dimensional hanging surfaces, the possibility of moving toward a more three dimensional mode presented itself as a possible next step.

This document is an attempt to objectify the subjective. The purpose of the investigation was to determine how a previous mode of expression, namely, two dimensional mixed media, could evolve toward an expressive mode which incorporated the making of three dimensional works. The main concern was to determine how the two dimensional statement gave way to one which was three dimensional, or what constituted the three dimensionality of the work.

As the discussion proceeds, I think given my definitions of form and surface it will become obvious at which point the objects become three dimensional and how they do so. For the purpose of clarification, by "form" I mean that part which appears volumetric, having depth; "surface" is that part which lacks actual depth. A form's "surface" is not to be confused with a surface which is a two dimensional plane lacking depth. I shall attempt to point out the changes which occur from piece to piece in the move toward three dimensionality as well as how the pieces relate to each other over all.

In attempting to explain the sources of stimuli which caused change from one piece to another a journal noting my reactions to the works in progress, sketches of ideas relative to the general investigation, and the works themselves were relied upon. I was in effect exploring a "mode of expression", my expression, my sensitivities and sensibilities. Part believing Arthur Koestler when he says "all verbal analysis tends to make implicit, part-conscious experiences explicit and fully conscious--and to destroy them in the process"<sup>1</sup> made difficult the attempt at explaining the sources of stimuli which produced change in the work.

Before discussing the five pieces done during this specific period of investigation I should like to interject an idea which is important in understanding the evolution of my work. I was becoming aware of the impression on me of the vastness of the Texas sky. Using polyester filling in works prior to the ones in this investigation might have been the result of my sky and cloud involvement. Windows On The World (slide 1), an early mixed media piece makes visible the polyester through the use of flexible plastic. Clouds may have pointed the way toward a new mode of expression. Cloud fascination did not have to manifest itself in an overt way. Implicitly, the connection between me and the "out there" was making itself felt in my work. As an external stimulus it was to be a strong influence on the movement from two dimensionality to three dimensionality, as strong as the stimuli causing change within the works themselves.

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York, 1964), p.371.

As my earlier work progressed the polyester was no longer revealed. It was contained in soft, irregular, satin shapes sewn to irregular shapes of acrylic stained canvas as in Untitled Mixed Media 1 (slide 2) and Untitled Mixed Media 2 (slide 3). These irregular shaped constructions became an important link between the early mixed media hangings such as Windows On The World and the direction in which the current project proceeded. The irregular shaped constructions were cut and reordered, then sewn together; areas of color utilized stitching as a linear element. The character of the stained canvas was changed in places by stitching plastic over it; the glossy areas related visually and tactilely to the slightly stuffed satin shapes stitched to the canvas. While irregular in outline the pieces appeared to be basically self contained with a definable border, a very low relief construction. The stuffed parts started to suggest a sculptural motif, but surface was dealt with more than form. Surface textural interest was gained through the use of craypas and chalk drawing on the canvas.

## CHAPTER II

### INVESTIGATION

#### Wall Piece

The first of the mixed media constructions in the current investigation was Wall Piece (slide 4). With it, the irregular shaped canvas was cut apart and arranged "floating" on a wall space of 14 feet by 20 feet. Through repetition of colors and strong diagonal movement each part related to the others and the parts to the whole. There are irregular flat pieces of stained canvas (surfaces), some partly covered with plastic, stuffed canvas, and stuffed satin forms. For the first time my work utilized the wall as an integral part of the work itself; the space between the parts (negative space) interacted with the entire piece. The sense of self containment that preceeding works had was eliminated in favor of a more expansive ground, the wall. Unity was achieved through the relationships of color, shape, size and direction. There is both a reaffirmation of the flatness of the wall through the painted surfaces and a beginning denial of it through stuffed forms.

The movement toward more, rather than less projection from the wall, toward fuller, more stuffed forms was the direction I did take. The separated parts of Wall Piece was a transition to work which maintained the separation of parts yet pushed the parts toward becoming more three dimensional forms.

### Three D Meanie

Three D Meanie (slide 5) was an attempt at making stuffed forms relate to each other through the use of a polyethelene rectangular solid. The forms were contained by and projected from the polyethelene. Some of the forms were meant to be seen front and back through the polyethelene. Unity was to be achieved partly through the use of the plastic envelope. Unfortunately the result was confusion. The forms could not clearly be seen. The plastic, instead of being a unifying element became an intrusion. The plastic was cut away.

It was decided to approximate the condition of the parts encased in plastic by attaching them to the wall and suspending them from the ceiling. One form was attached to the wall. It thrust downward diagonally to the left enabling the viewer to move to the large form on the left. This form was partially attached to the wall and appeared to emerge from it; the front of the form was held out in space, suspended from the ceiling. Movement continued in a left to right path across the front of the piece by a form completely suspended from the ceiling, then around to the right side by a vertically suspended form. There is a circular movement around a core of space. The sense of three dimensionality is due more to the incorporation of space than to the stuffed forms projecting; it is the action of the object on space.

### Modular Rhythm #1

The scattered, irregular shapes of Wall Piece made me think of the tension within that piece. A visual merging of the parts resolved that tension. I thought of pieces of a puzzle whose edges are contiguous with one another; they may interlock or be separated. Modular Rhythm #1



(slide 6) used the puzzle idea of interlockable yet separate parts; separate so that the viewer could either resolve the tension created by the distance between parts or increase the tension by mentally expanding the distance. Jigsaw puzzles are flat surfaces on which "illusionistic" references are drawn. My aim became to change that surface to form. My previous tentativeness about stuffing the parts was replaced by a commitment to really stuff each part, leaving no doubt as to the projecting nature of the work. Here, I think the fully three dimensional quality of my work is evident. All the surfaces, paint, plastic, and satin, in different combinations now work to intensify the forms-units projecting into space, whose depths vary from four to eight inches. The piece has a strong sensual quality due to the organic protruding forms, the tactile qualities of the materials and the sense of interlocking.

### Modular Rhythm #2

The lively colors of the forms of Modular Rhythm #1 made me want to consider using a more subdued, limited color range for the next piece. I wanted to note the effect that color would have on the degree to which the forms appeared to project. A red/blue-green, warm/cool color range was chosen for Modular Rhythm #2 (slide 7). Fewer, more curvilinear form were used than in Modular Rhythm #1. All were highly stuffed. The forms seemed to do more than project from the wall. Each part thrust itself outward, hardly making contact with the wall, letting go, almost floating in the space in front of the wall. They all seemed suspended. This was the feeling I tried to achieve by encasing Three D Meanie in plastic. The fullness of the forms suggests that there is a back side to them. Again, the tactile quality is strong.

The largest, most stuffed form was painted blue-green; red paint or satin was used for the smaller, less stuffed forms. Red generally appears to advance visually, while blue-green recedes. Here, due to the quantity of stuffing, the largest blue-green form appears to advance visually as much as the red forms. The blue satin forms, because of their shininess, appear to project more than the light red painted forms. The amount of stuffing, the size and placement of the forms overcome whatever notion might exist regarding the advancing and receding qualities of color. The limited color range makes the transition from part to part easy. Due to fewer color contrasts Modular Rhythm #2 is a quieter piece than Modular Rhythm #1. Even in its quietness it gave the impression of wanting to gently rotate along the wall. Cloud imagery again came to mind.

### One Corner: 2 Walls

Trying to suppress my feelings about clouds I backed the next piece into a corner. I became very excited about how One Corner: 2 Walls (slide 8) could fit into or go around a corner. I hoped that the use of two walls would mean a wider range of viewing possibilities. The corner arrangement allowed a large, triangular shaped stuffed form to fit on the floor as a base from which the parts traveled upward in "flip-flop" fashion on either side of the corner. The piece on the floor projects into the viewer's space increasing the overall three dimensional quality of the work. It does this by physically bridging the gap between the two walls forming the corner. Movement upward from the base is implied; a triangular solid of space from either side of which the parts reach out. The bulging character of the forms also contributes to the

impression of three dimensionality. Each side of the corner seems to attract the other's forms. There is a different kind of implied movement, movement across a given space, not just outward thrusting toward the viewer and interlocking as in Modular Rhythm #1 or implied rotation as in Modular Rhythm #2. This sense of implied movement helps to activate an otherwise stable piece, a triangular solid. Shadows on the wall cast by the forms amplify the three dimensional quality of the work.

This piece has some flexibility about its installation. As previously mentioned, it could also be placed on either side of a projecting corner. Another installation could line up the straight edges of the forms where the wall meets the ceiling so that the forms hang down against the wall. The forms could also be lined up along the baseboard standing up against the wall. While the three dimensional quality of the work is evident from the front, side viewing confirms its three dimensionality. The forms are actual; they seem to move, pulsate, swirl, or otherwise engage the space around them.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

My work is a way of dealing with the conflict that I feel between wanting to reach out and touch the clouds and not being able to. The satin and protruding forms are so tactile, inviting. In addition to making visual contact one can actually touch the forms. The frustration about clouds touches on appearance versus reality. Clouds are part of one's experience in that one perceives them as real; they are, however, only visually accessible. The stuffed forms in my work are not only perceived visually as real objects, but also tactilely.

While the journal entries were a way of organizing my responses to the works in progress, the sketchbook containing sketches and notes relative to the project was a more valuable means of charting my development. The sketchbook enabled me to see in which direction to move in order to develop the idea of three dimensionality in my work.

The mixed media pieces themselves strongly attest to the evolution of three dimensional objects from two dimensional ones. Forms evolved through increased stuffing causing the previously flat surfaces to project outward from the wall. These stuffed forms in some cases are free hanging so as to incorporate space or are placed in a corner so as to imply movement across a given space. A feeling of three dimensionality is thus experienced in a variety of ways.

At the outset it was stated that I partly agreed with Arthur Koestler when he said "all verbal analysis tends to make implicit, part-conscious

experiences explicit and fully conscious--and to destroy them in the process."<sup>1</sup> I am less inclined now to agree with him. Throughout this investigation materials and ideas were dealt with, questions asked and answered by the making of objects. This project with its accompanying record keeping has enabled me to become aware of some of the sources of stimuli in the production of my work. The increased sense of self awareness gained during the course of the investigation is as important as the works produced.

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York, 1964), p.371.

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Koestler, Arthur, The Act of Creation, New York, Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1964.





























